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WORLD NO. 1 SABALENKA COMPLETES 'SUNSHINE DOUBLE' AT MIAMI OPEN

Aryna Sabalenka made history as she beat Coco Gauff in the Miami Open women's singles final 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 on Saturday. A look...

FIRST SINCE SWIATEK TO SEAL THE DOUBLE

The World No. 1 overpowered Gauff in the first and third sets with sizzling groundstroke winners and became the fifth woman and the first since Iga Swiatek in 2022 to accomplish the "Sunshine Double" — winning Indian Wells followed by Miami in the same season. It was Sabalenka's second straight title at the Miami Open, Gauff's hometown tournament

MEANS A LOT: ARYNA AFTER HISTORIC FEAT

- "It means a lot," Sabalenka said after joining Poland's Swiatek, German great Steffi Graf, Belgian Kim Clijsters and fellow Belarusian Victoria Azarenka on the list of women to win both titles in same year
- "My goal always been to put my name in the history, and I just did it," the World No. 1 added after winning the title

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SABALENKA IS FIFTH WOMAN TO COMPLETE 'SUNSHINE DOUBLE'

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

West Asia situation is sensitive and warrants restraint in public discourse, says Modi; Don keeps option for ground ops open in Iran, sends more troops

CONG REMARKS COULD ENDANGER INDIAN LIVES: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves *nelkathir* (rice sheaf) during an election rally in Palakkad, Kerala on Sunday | PTI

SHYAM P V @ Palakkad

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said his government is doing everything in its power to ensure the safety of Indians working and living in Gulf countries but the Congress is trying to politicise the ongoing Iran war by making "dangerous and irresponsible" remarks.

Speaking at an election rally in Palakkad in Kerala, from where lakhs of people work in Gulf countries, Modi said the situation remains sensitive and warrants restraint in public discourse. However, he alleged, Congress leaders are issuing reckless statements amid an evolving international situation that could endanger the lives of Indians.

"It appears as though the Congress is willing to risk the lives of nearly one crore Indians living in the Gulf, merely to gain political advantage," Modi said.

The PM's comments come days after Congress leader Rahul Gandhi attacked the Centre's handling of the West Asia crisis, terming India's foreign policy 'compromised' and 'a joke'.

"The PM will do what US and Israel say. He will not work in the interest of India," Gandhi had said last week, criticising India's foreign policy stance.

Speaking in Palakkad, Modi stressed the Centre is closely monitoring the situation and taking measures to mitigate the impact on India and Indian nationals living in the region.

"The welfare of Indian citizens abroad is central to my government's policy response," the prime minister said, adding that India has been actively engaging with global leaders as tensions have escalated.

"Since the outbreak of the conflict, I have been in constant touch with global leaders," Modi added.

DAY 30 | WAR WATCH

Indians' safety top priority

Modi said countries in the Gulf are prioritising the safety of Indian nationals during the conflict. "Our embassies are working round the clock to ensure that our brothers and sisters there face no hardship," he added

France denounces Houthis

France condemned on Sunday two attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels on Israeli targets, accusing them of escalating tension in the Gulf by entering the war. "Houthis should abstain from all attacks," spokesman Pascal Confavreux said

Iranian strikes at Saudi Arabia's Prince Sultan Air Base damaged a US E-3 AWACS aircraft along with a few refuelling aircraft | X

Iran taunts Trump, says waiting for US boots on ground

AGENCIES @ Tehran, Tel Aviv, Dubai

A top Iranian official warned the US against a ground invasion, saying its troops would be set "on fire," as regional diplomats met on Sunday in Pakistan in hopes of opening direct US-Iran talks and ending the month-long war.

Iran's parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said Iranian forces were "waiting for the arrival of American troops on the ground to set them on fire and punish their regional partners forever," according to Iranian state media.

Iran warned of escalation after Israeli airstrikes hit several universities, including ones that Israel claimed were used for nuclear research and development. The paramilitary Revolutionary Guard warned that Iran would consider Israeli universities and branches of US universities in the region "legitimate targets" unless offered safety assurances for Iranian universities, state media reported.

The Israeli military said an impact at an industrial zone may have been caused by missile shrapnel, shortly after it detected a new barrage fired from Iran.

Foreign ministers from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Turkey started talks on the war, with Islamabad acting as a go-between between the United States and Iran. The four-way meeting between the Muslim nations was convened "to review the evolving regional situation and discuss issues of mutual interest", Pakistan's foreign ministry said in a brief statement.

US-Israeli strikes hit the Iranian port city of Bandar Khamir near the Strait of Hormuz, killing five persons, Iranian state media reported. IRNA news agency said four persons were wounded.

207 taluks stare at drinking water crunch this summer

Four dists to suffer most

Among the 31 districts, the worst-affected taluks are concentrated in Uttara Kannada, Belagavi, Kalaburagi and Tumakuru

High temperatures will adversely affect agriculture. Water scarcity may also force wild animals to enter human habitats, and there could be a rise in the incidence of disease among people

C Govindaraju, professor at the UAS

BK LAKSHMIKANTHA @ Mysuru

SOARING summer temperatures could precipitate a drinking-water crisis across the state. According to the latest report by the State-Level Weather Watch Committee, 207 taluks are expected to face water shortage this summer, while 60 taluks are already in the midst of water scarcity. In addition, 2,258 gram panchayats have been flagged as vulnerable, with 212 panchayats currently experiencing acute water scarcity.

Among the state's 31 districts, the worst-affected taluks are concentrated in Uttara Kannada (12), Belagavi (14), Kalaburagi (11) and Tumakuru (10). At the gram panchayat level, Kalaburagi accounts for 180 affected local bodies, followed by Uttara Kannada (170), Haveri (138), Mandya (130) and Belagavi (126).

To mitigate the crisis, authorities have deployed four departmental water tankers and 56 private tankers. They have also engaged 270 private borewells to sustain supply, from where water is being delivered to 246 villages.

During the peak summer season of March to May, authorities anticipate above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts of the state. Above-normal heatwave days with positive anomalies – ranging from three to six days – are likely over much of the north-interior districts and in select pockets of south-interior Karnataka, including Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Bengaluru Rural and Bengaluru Urban.

Authorities said a transition from La Niña to ENSO-neutral conditions is expected in April, with ENSO-neutral conditions likely to prevail through May to July. From June to August, El Niño is expected to emerge (62% chance) and persist at least through the end of 2026.

The shift from a dissipating La Niña phase toward ENSO-neutral conditions is already under way. There is a high likelihood (70%) of El Niño developing between June and September.

Meanwhile, the state faces an elevated risk of "monsoon breaks" – prolonged dry spells – during peak months of July to August with the potential for substantial moisture deficits resulting in below-normal rainfall in the Krishna and Cauvery basins.

CONTINUED ON: P5

EXPRESS READ

Premium FAR still in high court, But city corporations bet on it

Bengaluru: Amid uncertainty over Premium FAR (Floor Area Ratio), all five city corporations have factored it in as a major revenue source, and are aiming to mop up over Rs 2,100 crore. "The Premium FAR issue has been challenged in the Karnataka High Court, and the matter remains sub judice with interim directions, pending final adjudication," experts opine. | P2

Debt-ridden man kills mom, sis before attempting suicide

Bengaluru: A debt-stricken youth allegedly killed his mother and sister, slit the throat of his nephew and tried to end his own life at Mallenahalli near Attibele in Anekal taluk on Saturday night. The accused and the nephew survived and are undergoing treatment. Relatives said continuous harassment by creditors may have pushed the family to take the extreme step | P3

Four children, all cousins, drown in Yadgir

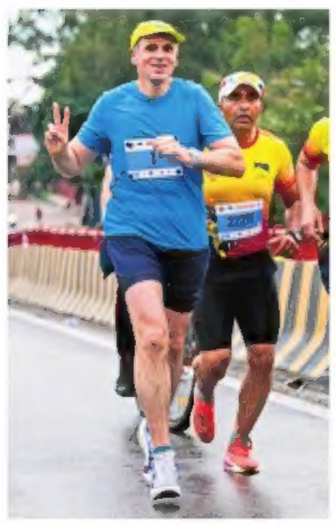
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Yadgir

IN a tragic incident, four children from the same extended family drowned in a pond in an agricultural field at Naganur village in Shorapur taluk of Yadgir district on Sunday.

The deceased are: Kiran (6), son of Mallappa, Basamma (11), daughter of Basappa, and brothers Sharat (6) and Hanumesh (7), sons of Raju. Basamma was the daughter of Raju's brother Basappa. Mallappa is married to the sister of Raju and Basappa.

According to preliminary reports, the children had gone to the farm to play and later entered the pond for swimming. Unaware of the depth, one of the children reportedly slipped and started to drown. In a desperate attempt to rescue each other, the other children entered the pond and all of them drowned one after another.

Shorapur Deputy Superintendent of Police Javeed Inamdar visited the spot. The Kembhavi police registered a case and initiated an investigation to ascertain the exact circumstances that led to the tragedy.



JAMMU RUN

Jammu and Kashmir CM Omar Abdullah participates in Jammu's first-ever international marathon on Sunday | PTI

Lanka thanks India for fuel supply

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Sunday thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for sending an oil shipment to ease fuel supply disruptions in the Island nation caused by the West Asia conflict. A shipment of 38,000 MT of fuel, comprising 20,000 MT of diesel and 18,000 MT of petrol, arrived in Colombo on Saturday P9

Two more Indian ships cross Hormuz

NEW DELHI: Two more Indian-flagged LPG tankers, carrying roughly a day's supply of the country's cooking gas, have safely navigated through the war-hit Strait of Hormuz and are expected to reach Indian shores in the next couple of days. While BW TYR is proceeding towards Mumbai, BW ELM is en route to New Mangalore with an estimated arrival date of April 1

Oppn cross as U'khand begins audit on status of minorities ahead of polls

NARENDRA SETHI @ Dehradun

IN a move that has sparked political tensions, Uttarakhand's BJP-led government has constituted a high-level committee to audit the status of minorities in the state, ahead of next year's Assembly elections and the upcoming Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

The seven-member high-level committee will do a comprehensive study of the socioeconomic, educational, and cultural shifts within the minority communities in the state over the last 25 years–essentially since the inception of Uttarakhand.

The committee will be chaired by retired judge Akhilesh Chand Sharma. Other members include retired IAS officer Shatrughan Singh, Doon University Vice-Chancellor Surekha Dangwal, subject expert Manu Gaur, State Minority Commission Vice-Chairperson Farzana Begum, social worker Rajpal Singh, and the Director of the Minority Welfare Department as the member secretary. Speaking to this newspaper, senior committee member and retired IAS officer Shatrughan Singh said, "The committee's work is in progress, and it has already held four meetings."

Pushkar Singh Dhami, Uttarakhand CM

Panel's report to guide future policies: Govt

According to its official mandate, the committee will evaluate the economic and educational status of minorities. It will then prepare a detailed report based on empirical data, which will guide the government's welfare policies

While the government has called it a purely administrative exercise, the Opposition has raised a red flag. "The way the BJP is trying to delete names of people from the Muslim community from the electoral rolls, it appears the government is gathering this data to create a hostile environment and facilitate exploitation," Mohan Kala, spokesperson for the Uttarakhand Congress, alleged, noting the timing is suspect.

The BJP has dismissed the allegations as fear-mongering. Minority welfare minister Khajan Das said the data will allow the government to take informed decisions.

Under a temple, you may find a stupa: Priyank

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

OBLIQUELY referring to the demolition of Babri Masjid and construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya, Karnataka Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and IT/BT Minister Priyank Kharge said here on Sunday that a Buddisht 'stupa' could be found if one searched under an ancient temple.

Releasing a book – Karavaliya Charitreyalli Hyder Ali Mattu Tipu Sultan – authored by journalist Naveen Surinje, Kharge said, "If you go deep in search of history, you will get entangled. If you demolish any mosque you may find a temple, if you demolish a temple you will find a stupa. If a stupa is demolished, I don't know... my limit is 3,500 years of history," he said.

Further analysing history, the minister said Buddhist history was preserved by Denanapriya Ashoka 2,500 years ago, but came to light only 150 years ago.

"Who buried our history? Many don't know Kanishka, Harshavardhana, Gupta and Maurya dynasties, Kharge said.

CONTINUED ON: P4

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